

## MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTONINFORMATIONThursday, March 28, 1968  
10:15 a.m.*Read  
10:55A*

MR. PRESIDENT:

These comparative figures may interest you.

Input to GVN Forces

	<u>February 1967</u>	<u>February 1968</u>
Draftees	4006	7022
Regular Forces Volunteers	1077	5335
Regional Forces Volunteers	1843	2880
Popular Forces Volunteers	1004	1869
Total	7,930	17,106

HARRY —  
THIS WOULD  
BE GOOD TO  
PUT IN SARECH.  
WROTE Rostow SOMEWHERE

Xerox by sent to Harry M. Pearson  
3/29  
mydr

File date 26 Feb 68  
2 c

INFORMATION

48

~~SECRET~~

Wednesday, February 28, 1968  
12:50 p. m.

Mr. President:

Herewith Phil Habib's observations  
on the situation in Vietnam.

Despite its length, I commend it  
to you as an exceedingly well balanced  
effort.

W. W. Rostow

~~SECRET~~

"Observations on the Situation in Viet-Nam, February 26, 1968"

WWRostow:rln

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority State 10-27-78, NSC 7-13-79  
By ing, NARS, Date 8-21-79

VV

~~SECRET~~

OBSERVATIONS ON THE SITUATION IN VIET-NAM  
February 26, 1968

48a

DECLASSIFIED

Authority STATE letter OCT 27 1978

By ip, NARS, Date 6-21-79

Introduction

1. This is a report covering a set of opinions derived from an examination of the situation in Viet-Nam. It is written following three days of intensive conversations with Americans and Vietnamese in Saigon. It is an attempt to highlight some aspects of the situation which are of particular importance in the light of the VC/NVA Tet Offensive.

The Tet Offensive in Retrospect

2. We should not belittle the scope, importance and unfavorable consequences of the enemy offensive. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that so far Hanoi has failed in its over-riding objectives. It sought to destroy the political and administrative structure of the GVN. The enemy wished to crumble the GVN to the point where it could not function and to render irrelevant the power of the United States. This was to be done by force, on a national scale, probably recognizing that it would be costly in terms of VC/NVA lives. It was costly to the enemy and it did not succeed, but we paid a high price.

3. The enemy struck hard and with superb attention to organization, supply and secrecy. He was audacious and courageous, with good leadership and tight discipline in the ranks. The Tet "let-down" added to the element of surprise and the enemy enjoyed a tactical advantage in many places. There were many "cliff-hangers" as the Vietnamese

~~SECRET~~

and the allied forces met the attack, and the enemy had a number of major successes.

4. A preliminary balance sheet of the Tet offensive now looks as follows:

Minus Factors

a. The powerful capability of the Communist forces was demonstrated to the Vietnamese and to the world. The VC/NVA forces took the initiative and still hold it.

b. The people in South Viet-Nam were handed a psychological blow, particularly in the urban areas, where the feeling of security had been strong. Those who had been "within the protection of the Government" found out how vulnerable they were. There is a fear of further attacks and there are new opportunities for Communist propaganda and subversive activities in the cities.

c. The GVN has been forced to turn its attention to the emergency and its normal functions suffer as a result. Schools are closed, and governmental services are either burdened beyond their capacity or in some cases severely curtailed. The chain of government downward from the capital has been weakened and in the case of many villages and hamlets has been broken.

d. The Revolutionary Development program, which had been showing a marked degree of success, has received a severe set-back.

We do not as yet have a full reading on this but there is no question that the programs in the countryside suffered. The Revolutionary Development program for 1968 will need to be re-structured. Meanwhile, as the enemy rampages in the countryside and threatens the cities, it is difficult to re-start our countrywide programs.

e. The government faces a monumental task of re-building in the cities and caring for the refugees. This is manageable, but takes resources and energy. The problems involved will be multiplied to the extent that the enemy continues his campaign of harassment and destruction.

f. The encouraging economic progress of the past year is set back. Severe monetary pressures are expected, the commercial system is in disarray, the distribution problem is serious, and the damage to the industrial base is substantial.

#### Plus Factors

a. The institutions of government and the basic administrative structure were not shattered. The Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary are functioning within the constitutional framework. The Ministries are at work, some better than others, and the provincial administrations are functioning. The preservation of the constitutional government has meant that needed direction is provided in an organized way. Most importantly, the continuity of leadership and control has been safeguarded. The GVN is viable, and the fruits of the past two years of political development were not lost. In fact, the value of the political

evolution through which Viet-Nam has been passing has been proven in meeting the emergency.

b. The Vietnamese armed forces did well in the first shock of attack. There were no unit defections in the ARVN. The integrity of the armed forces was preserved and the chain of command functioned. We still lack detailed information on the status of the Popular Forces and information on the Regional Forces is only a little better, but it is generally believed that both these are not in any danger of substantial disintegration.

c. There was no popular uprising in support of the Communists as they planned and expected. Not only did the people not rally to the VC but it is more and more evident that they rejected willing cooperation with the VC to any significant extent.

d. The VC/NVA took heavy casualties. We do not yet know the total effect of this on the enemy. Nor do we know enough about his capacity to recover.

e. The physical damage to the cities is not beyond the capacity to rebuild and the job is beginning.

f. There is no basic shortage of food, medicine, or other necessary goods. There has been and will continue to be a major problem of getting goods out to where they are needed. But needs are being met, and transportation facilities are being restored.

g. The task of organizing to meet the emergency needs of relief and rehabilitation got off to a good start. The special task force continues to function, although the direction and drive provided by Vice President Ky is no longer present. The close daily attention and cooperation given to this effort by the US Mission continues and is essential to the job.

h. There was at the outset of the emergency a coming together of nationalist, anti-Communist elements in the society in support of the government. Key leaders and major groupings responded to the danger and condemned the enemy. However, it is also true that the mass of people have been passive, as they usually are, to the government. Support of a more active nature came largely from elements traditionally aligned with the government and against the Communists, e.g. Catholics, the moderate Buddhist leaders, organized labor, nationalist parties, the Hoa Hao, the Cao Dai, and the middle class. The attempt to provide a broad national front of opposition to the Communists in the face of the danger is in a preliminary stage and may have some limited success.

#### Problems and Prospects

5. If the above is a balance sheet of the recent past, then what are the problems and prospects for the immediate future? The first shock of the Communist Tet offensive has passed over the cities and, to a lesser and incompletely known extent, the countryside. There are advantages and opportunities for both sides in the present situation. How the battle for Viet-Nam goes will depend on how each side now functions.

6. The Enemy -- We know little of what to expect from the VC/NVA in the immediate future. It is expected that the enemy will seek to keep up the pressure on the cities, expand and consolidate his presence in the countryside, and tie down and if possible inflict a spectacular defeat on major allied forces.

7. There is no doubt that the combat effectiveness of many enemy units has been seriously reduced. We do not know if the enemy's overall military potential is significantly lower than at the beginning of the year. Through infiltration from the north and recruitment in the south the enemy can maintain a major threat. We know he has a supply capability and suspect he has a supply position to sustain combat at an intense level.

8. The VC/NVA forces remain strong numerically and can harass and maintain pressure on the urban areas while operating in the countryside. The enemy's organization and his infrastructure remain relatively intact.

9. However, by keeping his units near the cities the enemy is exposed, with bases uncovered and supply lines extended. He does not have the same advantage of surprise he enjoyed at Tet. In this posture, he is unlikely to be able to mount massive, sustained attacks comparable to those he attempted in his initial effort. On the other hand, he probably is capable of maintaining a loose encirclement of most towns and cities, harassing and interdicting lines of communication, and mounting periodic

~~SECRET~~

7

attacks by fire on the towns and nearby military installations. He may be able, in some areas, to mount major attacks on selected targets which he deems particularly weak. He can mount major operations in several areas -- Saigon, Kontum, Danang, and northern I Corps - of sufficient scope as to seriously contest allied control.

10. While many reports continue to allude to a "second wave" of massive attacks, the enemy's posture and capabilities suggest a campaign of diverse character. Most indications point to his continued adherence to the basic concept of his winter-spring campaign -- general offensive combined with a general uprising. Within this framework, the enemy can be expected to exercise the capabilities outlined above boldly -- but not recklessly -- and with determination over the weeks ahead. He will attempt to coordinate his operations geographically, so that they complement each other. He will seek to intensify his political and psychological programs aimed at undermining the will of the populace and of the GVN at all levels. And he will seek to combine these activities with an intensive effort to subvert and disintegrate the RVNAF, and to "heighten the contradictions" between the GVN and US. By these means, he threatens the piecemeal erosion of GVN authority in outlying provinces, and the progressive disintegration of ARVN.

11. The Vietnamese Armed Forces -- The current posture and combat effectiveness of the Vietnamese armed forces are not encouraging. In

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

8

most areas, the major elements are in a defensive role, close in to the urban areas, and operating in an unaggressive manner. The chance to strike hard at the enemy while he is exposed has not been seized. While the organizational integrity of virtually all units has been maintained, many are considerably understrength and of lessened combat effectiveness. As mentioned earlier, we lack an accurate assessment of the status of RF and PF elements in the countryside.

12. The Vietnamese Army frequently faces an enemy who is better armed and who has superior fire-power. The Vietnamese performance is generally better where close support from US forces is available. We still face the problem of poor leadership in some of the major commands. Moreover, the problems of poor discipline and looting are always with us.

13. The GVN is moving to speed up its mobilization to add 65,000 men to the armed forces by mid-year. The 19 and 18 year olds will be drafted beginning on March 1 and May 1 respectively. Some needed changes in top leadership (II Corps and IV Corps) are about to be made. President Thieu has reaffirmed his intention to proceed with the planned reorganization in the armed forces. Planned changes among Province Chiefs are also said to be about to begin. Finally, Thieu is now talking about a further mobilization, to take advantage of the sense of danger and urgency following the enemy offensive. He mentioned his desire to add further to the strength of the armed forces and he will be talking to MACV about the

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

9

necessary support for additional forces beyond the 65,000 men now programmed.

14. This is all to the good, but the key unknown remains the manner in which the Vietnamese armed forces will respond to the challenges of the immediate future when faced with a much more aggressive enemy. MACV is optimistic on the basis of the recent showing, but the inadequacies of the past are still fresh in many people's minds.

15. Politics and the Government -- As has been noted, the GVN survived the Tet offensive. The question now is whether it will get on to its tasks with a continuing sense of urgency, proper attention to priorities, and the required unity at the top; or will we have a return to business as usual, with bickering and personal rivalries, and with no effective attack on the needs that are known and recognized, e.g. reorganization for greater effectiveness, dealing with corruption, better leadership, and broader and better organized political participation and support.

16. The Thieu-Ky relationship remains a key factor. It is not all that it should be, although each of them insists that he wishes to cooperate fully with the other. We still have the problem of the people around them playing politics as usual. Ky is not happy about the way Thieu is leading the country -- and said so. He wants a greater dynamism and more drastic action. On the other hand Thieu remains cautious, insisting on

~~SECRET~~

moving at only a slightly speeded pace toward basic reforms.

17. The Embassy continues to believe -- and reluctantly I am inclined to agree -- that while we can try to force the pace we must recognize the limitations of the people and the institutions with which we are working. We have been able to take advantage of the emergency to speed some things up -- mobilization, corps commander changes, promises of earlier administrative reform. The lack of action on corruption still confounds all; but another try is in progress in connection with up-coming administrative changes.

18. On the Thieu-Ky relationship, which affects the pace of action and reform, the Ambassador is confident he can handle it to where it will not get out of hand. He has done remarkably well on this so far -- to the degree that Ky has not been tempted to allow his hot-head followers to try any tricks. But I sense a new element of impatience in Ky. Hopefully it will be <sup>challenged</sup> constructively and thus it will work in favor of forcing the pace at which Thieu might otherwise move. Our role in this question is one demanding subtlety and power applied at the right time, and I can imagine no one better able to provide these than Ambassador Bunker. He is fully aware of the nature of the problem and never lets it get far ahead of him.

19. The Cabinet is not brilliant, but some of its ministers have shown up exceedingly well in the crunch. The Prime Minister is the subject of

~~SECRET~~

11

a good deal of criticism for his failure to exercise dynamic leadership. He suffers from the lack of a political base and is stymied by Thieu's reluctance to act decisively to provide necessary guidance and support. It is generally believed that Prime Minister Loc will not have a long tenure, but that Thieu will find it difficult to seize upon a ready replacement.

20. The National Assembly has done little in a legislative capacity as yet, but it has not had a chance. The leadership of the two houses continues to be responsible and responsive to the government. After the first days of rallying around in the emergency the Assemblymen are beginning to express themselves more openly in a critical tone, but no one expects this to get out of hand. Thieu seems confident he will be able to handle the legislature which is just about to begin its first major task -- the budget.

21. Political party organization remains stymied, and is likely to continue to be a slow and tortuous process. No one in the Mission, and no one among the Vietnamese political elite believes it is possible to forge a national political movement at this time. All agree that the National Front surfaced under the leadership of Tran Van Don on February 19, will not and can not develop into a real political movement. It can, however, serve as a means to rally support in the nationalist cause against the VC, and thereby play a useful temporary role. That is

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

12

how Thieu sees it, and in fact that is as far as he intends it to go. He does not trust Don and some others involved, and it is obvious that Thieu is suspicious of the role being played by Ky's supporters in the organizing of the Front. Even some members of the political elite who have joined the Front are not anxious to see it develop into much more than a psychological forum to rally public interest against the VC.

22. There are some beginning steps being taken to develop political party organizations. These are so tentative as to be certainly slow in developing and subject to many changes and false starts. Thieu hopes to foster such moves, but his plans are vague and in the hands of poor executors. In the meantime Thieu has been having useful meetings with the leaders of all significant political elements in the community, seeking their support for the government and its programs. It is this personalized political approach that preoccupies him at the moment, rather than any attempt at institutionalizing the political variables.

23. Negotiations in the Present Context -- There is great concern among the Vietnamese that the US might in some way unilaterally embark upon negotiations with Hanoi or the NLF. In fact, the canard of US collusion with the VC in the Tet offensive -- as absurd as it may seem -- continues to have some currency.

24. It is the universal opinion in the Mission Council that we would face a major crisis in Vietnam if Hanoi were somehow to change its line, accept the San Antonio formula, and engage us in talks at this time.

~~SECRET~~

13

| General Westmoreland is obviously strongly opposed to anything that  
smacks of stopping the bombing and believes that he would be faced with  
| a prompt and uncontrollable crisis in the Vietnamese armed forces if we  
started talking to Hanoi in the present circumstances. Ambassador Bunker  
is not so dogmatically rigid; but he does point out that our dealing with  
| Hanoi at this time would create grave problems with the GVN, which is  
not prepared for a negotiation in the wake of the Tet offensive.

25. The only Vietnamese I found who has even given any thought to the  
problem in anything like a sensible way is -- not surprisingly -- Foreign  
Minister Tran Van Do. He said he recognized that if Hanoi were to accept  
the San Antonio formula we would, of course, soon find ourselves moving  
toward negotiations in one way or another. He shrugged and asked  
rhetorically what there was to negotiate given the views of Hanoi, the  
attitude of the NLF, and the environment in South Viet-Nam after the  
Tet offensive. He does not dismiss the need for a peaceful settlement --  
rather he anticipates it -- but he does prefer that negotiations come  
later on, at a more propitious moment. President Thieu sees  
negotiations now as impossible, but he believes that the situation will be  
so changed by early 1969 that Hanoi will be prepared to deal on a reasonable  
basis. He is not clear on what leads him to this conclusion. He merely  
expresses a general expectation that the enemy will be badly off by then.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

26. The Foreign Press in Viet-Nam -- On February 26 there were 615 foreign correspondents in Viet-Nam, of whom almost 300 were American. This massive attention to every tremor in Viet-Nam creates the obvious problems. Barry Zorthian outlined press attitudes as follows:

a. The responsible experienced reporters are cognizant of the basic frustration of the VC/NVA over-all objectives in the Tet offensive. They are favorably aware of the performance of the Vietnamese armed forces, and well disposed toward the early reaction of the GVN on such matters as relief. They are aware of the problems the VC face and are as objective as can be expected in examining VC capabilities on the basis of limited knowledge.

b. The same group of responsible journalists, however, have a negative slant as well. They consider GVN performance after the first weeks as a fall-back to normalcy rather than a case of urgency. They condemn the armed forces for failing to follow-up and move out on the enemy. They find the Thieu-Ky rivalry fascinating. They are critical of Thieu's personality, aware of the political maneuvering going on, and generally cynical about Vietnamese political developments. These journalists believe the VC are in a position to hit Saigon again in a repeat performance and they are fearful of the results. They argue that the VC have sucked us into the urban areas and are thus left free to control the countryside while recruiting heavily. They do not accept our account of

~~SECRET~~

VC losses of personnel, and do not believe we have a realistic appraisal of the situation in the country. In general this segment of the press is pessimistic about the future.

c. The so-called "young turk" correspondents have all the above criticisms plus a few even more extreme. Some of them think we are through and ought to get out.

d. The European correspondents are worse than that in their outlook and the French reporters are at the bottom of the heap.

27. Zorthian expects we are going to face the toughest time ever with the press. After meeting about a half-dozen of the best reporters among them and listening to their comments on the situation, I can only agree.

#### General Conclusions

28. Viet-Nam has undergone a traumatic shock over the past month. This has affected Vietnamese and Americans. Old optimism is giving way to new doubts. Old concepts are being examined but with some reluctance to seek new approaches. The early flush of urgency that was sparked by emergency needs is not being sufficiently sustained among the Vietnamese. The pride in successful defense is not being translated into a counter-offensive, and the enemy is being allowed to recoup and consolidate. The defensive mentality of the Viet-Nameese is to the fore and will be hard to change. This applies to both the military and civilian elements who find in the momentary lull in the war an occasion to return to earlier less strenuous paths.

29. The enemy on the other hand, has the initiative and is expanding his activities. He has added another dimension to the war by attacking the cities and directly threatening GVN authority there rather than only in the countryside. The enemy is persistent and has a good organization. Despite initial failure to meet his total objectives and his heavy losses, the enemy has the capacity to continue his stepped-up campaign, although probably not on the scale of the Tet period.

30. In many ways there is a new ball game in Viet-Nam. We were winning; steadily if not spectacularly. Now the other side has put in a lot of new players and has scored heavily against us. We did not win a "victory" despite the losses inflicted on the enemy. The Tet offensive was a serious setback -- but the situation is far from hopeless.

31. We still do not know enough of the facts to assess the full consequences of what happened. Information on many key factors is still spotty or lacking altogether. It is hard to find consensus among Vietnamese or Americans as to where we stand or what to expect next. As a result there is a degree of confusion which will take some time to sort out. It would therefore be wise to hold off final judgements. It will also be prudent to approach basic new decisions with caution while the totality of the battlefield -- military, political, economic, and psychological -- is examined.

~~SECRET~~

17

32. Ambassador Bunker's last words before I left Saigon were, "If we stay with it, we will come out all right." He does not expect that the unfavorable consequences of the enemy's offensive will be overcome in a short time. I agree -- any expectation that we will reach the status ante-Tet easily and quickly is not realistic. In some respects we will not be able to recoup losses in the foreseeable future. We will need to re-think earlier programs and re-order some of our priorities. The Mission has not been able to do this across the board. It may be some time before this will be possible but in the meantime a thorough review of existing programs and the possible need for modifications is warranted. We should avoid deciding on any major moves or commitment of resources without such a review which is best conducted by the Mission in the first instance.

~~SECRET~~

2C  
49  
INFORMATION

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

XXXXXX

Wednesday, February 28, 1968  
12:55 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith the full text of the document which Westy summarized earlier and which Gen. Wheeler referred to at length at breakfast this morning.

I have marked the key passages.

The recurrent note of urgency is striking.

W. W. Rostow

XXXXXX

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

28 Feb 1968

"Circular from Central Office for South Vietnam  
Current Affairs Committee and Military Affairs  
Committee of South Vietnamese Liberation Army  
Headquarters"

DECLASSIFIED

Authority CIA 2-6-80 letter, NSC 10-25-78 letter  
By inf, NARS, Date 7-16-80.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

49a  
28 February 1968

Circular from Central Office for South Vietnam Current Affairs Committee and Military Affairs Committee of South Vietnamese Liberation Army Headquarters.

The following is a full translation of a captured enemy document which contains information on the continuation of the Tet offensive. This document was captured in February 1968, in South Vietnam by 2/60 Inf, 9th US Inf. Div. The document was received at Combined Document Exploitation Center (CDEC) on 23 February 1968, and summarized under CDEC document log number L02-1961-68, in bulletin number 9724, dated 23 February 1968.

(CIA COMMENT--The document ostensibly presents the conclusions of a high-level meeting on 31 January which reviewed the impact of the Tet offensive. It seems unlikely, however, that the enemy high command could have had much more than preliminary reports on the offensive by 31 January. Thus, much of the argumentation in the document on the necessity to conduct a careful, sustained, and lengthy offensive probably represented views held by the high command prior to the initiation of the first fierce wave of attacks which created the initial impression that the Communists might be committing all their assets to one go-for-broke push.)

The full text follows:

1. Concerning preliminary assessment of the situation on the evening of 31 January 1968, the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) Current Affairs Committee and the Military Affairs Committee of South Vietnamese Liberation Army (SVNLA) Headquarters meeting to assess the situation and bring out specific matters related to leadership and guidance to be disseminated to and implemented by addressees.

2. We have launched simultaneous and timely attacks on almost all towns and cities, district seats, sectors and enemy military bases as planned.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NLS 81-91

By is, NARS, Date 12-13-82 ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Generally speaking, achievements were scored at the first step. In areas where offensive and uprising were closely coordinated or where the three-pronged attacks in mountainous and lowland areas were comparatively coordinated, more achievements were attained. Within a short period of time we succeeded in paralyzing the puppet government administration from central to local echelons, and confusing the US command channels. We succeeded in wearing down and destroying an important enemy element, many headquarters of the puppet troops and a large quantity of war facilities. Timely and accurate fire was directed on main objectives. The attack was extremely fierce. The COSVN Current Affairs Committee and the Military Affairs Committee of the SVNLA headquarters considered this achievement as a very great one. It is the first achievement that has an extremely important significance. It gains revolutionary pride for the masses and places us in a position to advance and to attain greater achievements in both military and political fields. It enables us to make greater efforts to continue to attack (the enemy) and to be resolute to attain the final victory. We have beaten the enemy accurately and successfully. The Current Affairs Committee and the Military Affairs Committee of the SVNLA headquarters warmly cite and commend all cadre, party and group members of all echelons, within and outside the army, and all cadre and troops within the armed forces. However, we still have the following shortcomings and weaknesses. We failed to seize a number of primary objectives and to completely destroy mobile and defensive units of the enemy. We also failed to hold the occupied areas. In the political field we failed to motivate the people to stage uprisings and break the enemy oppressive control. In cities, as well as in rural areas and areas temporarily occupied by the enemy, the troop proselyting activities by the masses were not conducted on a broad front and the propaganda mission was not carried out in a timely and continuous manner. Signal, liaison and reporting in some areas, especially the signal liaison and command in the direction of the immediate objectives of the SVNLA headquarters and of regions were extremely slow and not closely coordinated etc.... (sic)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

3. Enemy: Although he had taken precautionary measures, he was surprised strategically and suffered heavy losses in strength and equipment. The puppet command agencies, installations and government administration of central echelon were paralyzed. His troops were driven into disorder. The US troops were put on the defensive. They became confused and demoralized. However, since we did not succeed in completely destroying many of his mobile and defensive units at the very start, nor did we closely coordinate offensive with uprising and troop proselytizing, the enemy still resisted and his units were not disrupted into pieces. If in the coming days, we fail to quickly motivate a large and powerful force of the masses to stand up against the enemy in time and if we fail to concentrate our armed forces to attack them continuously, they will certainly recover their strength and counterattack us more strongly. Not only will it limit our victories, it will create new difficulties for us.

4. Based on the resolution of the politburo and the development of the situation during the past two days, the COSVN Current Affairs Committee and the Military Affairs Committee of the Liberation Army headquarters would like to call the attention to the region (party) committees, military region (party) committee and party committee level agencies to the following basic problems:

A. It is imperative to be fully aware of the fact that the general offensive and central uprising which are directed against the enemy with an army of more than 1,200,000 stubborn, reactionary and well equipped soldiers, is a strategic offensive phase covering many military campaigns and uprisings in the local areas to break off all the enemy's counterattacks and is an extremely fierce struggle. Only when we succeed in destroying the entire puppet army and government, neutralizing the actual political and military support of the Americans and annihilating a large portion of the US allied forces, thus depriving them of all war facilities and crushing their attempt to invade our country, can we drive them into total defeat and achieve the final victory.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

At present the victories that we have gained in the first step (of our struggle) show that we are now powerful and the enemy is on the decline. Our fierce attacks are bringing them nearer to the danger of a bitter defeat. Consequently, we are quite able to successfully achieve our plan. However, while preparing and implementing this plan we have committed many errors and shortcomings as mentioned above, we can not yet therefore, achieve total victory in a short period. Our cadre armed forces and people must be well prepared mentally, ideologically and materially to fight resolutely under all circumstances in order to achieve total victory. These preparations must be made during a period of three or four months as mentioned in COSVN's directive to the region (party) committees.

B. It merits mentioning again that the concerned committees must thoroughly understand the guidelines of the general offensive and general uprising outlined as follows: There must be coordination between the three-prong attack, the three strategic areas, the urban areas and the surrounding rural areas. In the city the armed and political forces outside must coordinate closely with the revolutionary forces inside, these forces must coordinate with each other throughout the general battlefield and in the local area. Combat activities must always be accompanied by the development and building up of forces (VC). There must be close coordination of our activities in military, political and diplomatic fields.

C. The concerned committees are required once again to fully understand the basic principle of the general offensive and general uprising which is set down as follows: concentrate the largest military and political forces in the most logical way; direct the most fierce attack against the major strategic objectives; resolutely conduct continuous attacks against the vulnerable points of the US and puppet troops; and launch decisive attacks against key positions in order to gain decisive victories in areas where we (VC) must win; realize methods of achieving victories minute after minute and hour after hour; know how to develop the achieved

~~victories and resolutely counter and break off the enemy's counterattacks, pursue the enemy to the end in order to gain the greatest victories.~~

D. Considering the basic problems mentioned above and the situation during the past three days, the COSVN Current Affairs Committee and the Military Affairs Committee of the Liberation Army headquarters want to emphasize the following points so that good results can be achieved by the concerned committees in the days to come.

1. We must continue to make everybody fully understand the policy, guidelines and mission of the party, on this basis, we must incessantly heighten our determination to gain the greatest victory, permanently strengthen our will to fight the enemy continuously and to fight a protracted war. We must know how to foster and heighten the enthusiastic revolutionary spirit of the masses. ~~We must resolutely overcome such weak points as flinching at difficulties, being hesitant in attacking the enemy, becoming puzzled before a complicated situation or being overconfident before certain victories etc. (sic).~~ During this period, we must increase political tasks and build up a firm determination to accomplish important missions.

2. ~~We must resolutely concentrate our forces on specific targets and rapidly take advantage of the victories which we have just gained.~~ We must continuously attack the enemy without allowing him to rest and to have time for reorganization. We must attack him repeatedly in some disputed areas, we must attack him three or four times and not withdraw when finding it difficult to defeat him after the first attack. We must be resolute to completely destroy all major objectives which we have not yet been able to liquidate. We must destroy every mobile and organic unit of the puppet troops, closely pursue them and use troop proselyting (in conjunction with military action) to rapidly disrupt every major puppet unit of regiment size or division size. We must resolutely defend the objectives which we have seized and must be prepared to repel any enemy counterattack. ~~In regard to US troops, we should attack~~

him if we have a well prepared attack plan. When they counterattack us, we must be determined to annihilate them. When they shrink back, we must mainly use artillery, mortars, and sappers to attack them, surround them and snipe at them in order to annihilate or wear them down. We must not use main force units to attack them in order to avoid casualties. At the same time, we must step up enemy proselyting activities to neutralize and confuse them.

3. We must continuously destroy and repeatedly attack (enemy) bases, airfields, harbors, artillery positions, depots and strategic lines of communication to such a degree that the enemy can no longer use them.

4. The military offensive must be closely coordinated with the people's uprising. We must rapidly and resolutely motivate the people in towns and cities to take the streets (demonstration). We must arm the people and bring rural people into towns and cities, thus turning them into a rising political movement in order to break the oppressive control of the enemy at local areas and to overthrow the central puppet government. We must continue to pursue the enemy and completely annihilate him, not allowing him to counterattack. We must step up the troop proselyting movement of the people to the utmost in order to disintegrate every major enemy unit and to incite military revolt among his troops, we must also intensify enemy proselyting activities in all aspects and with any facilities available.

5. To strengthen our firm proselyting of towns and cities, we must rapidly and widely motivate the local population to act in coordination with the (military) offensive and uprising in towns and cities in order to seize the entire rural area and the remaining district capitals, which still remain under the enemy's oppressive control.

6. We must rapidly motivate the people to rise up in conjunction with the military offensive to liberate densely populated areas along lines of communication and to neutralize, completely destroy and control important lines of communication.

7. Armed and political forces must be developed quickly. ~~The strongest effort should be made to insure that "the progress we make in one day is equal to that made in one year."~~ The armed forces must be developed as fast as possible to solve the personnel problems in local areas. The number of cadre must be developed as quickly as the situation requires. Quickly strengthen the administrative organization at the basic units, the people's political organizations, the party and group organizations, etc... (sic).

8. ~~Take every opportunity to recruit as many civilian laborers as possible and successfully complete the activation of the transportation branch and the units assigned the duty of transporting weapons and ammunition.~~ Emphasis must be placed on immediate objectives to be sure that our troops can launch continuous counterattacks. The party committees must assign a capable committee member to be in charge of the above missions. Be sure that the policy dealing with the treatment of wounded and dead soldiers and the handling of US and RVN prisoners of war is successfully carried out.

9. ~~Successively step up propaganda activities to meet the requirements of the plan to motivate millions of people to hold demonstrations.~~ Step up activities to meet the requirements of the troop proselyting plan. Try to the utmost to take over the government and protect it. Immediately popularize the successive victories in the various areas. Heighten the victorious prestige of the people in large cities and be ready to respond to the second front (phase) when it is activated in Saigon. In other cities already occupied by us, we must establish an alliance of national (struggle and peace (seeking) forces in local areas so that they can be combined when the central organization officially comes into being.

10. ~~Be sure that newly liberated areas in the country and cities are successfully consolidated.~~ Quickly activate armed and political forces; form administrative organizations of different echelons; intensify defense and combat activities; have

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

the people establish an area defense system and motivate the people to be ready for action against enemy counterattack.

11. ~~Make timely improvement of the~~ methods of guidance and command.<sup>2</sup> Presently, we must concentrate the capabilities and resourcefulness of the masses to settle the changing situation. They must fully understand our immediate objectives and closely coordinate our main and secondary objectives. Follow up the situation every minute and disseminate our victories every moment. In all situations, especially in difficult ones, we must demonstrate persistence, readiness, calmness, intelligence and accuracy in our leadership activities. Division of work must be proper. Leadership must be thorough. Key missions must be fully understood and inflexibility must be avoided. Signal and liaison activities must be immediately improved to meet the requirements of the reporting procedures and especially to maintain contact with immediate objectives and between various regions and COSVN or the Military Affairs Committee, so that directives can be given promptly and without interruption. The region party committees and military region party committees must make the various echelons fully aware of the above; work out a plan of future activities, devise a method of leadership and submit reports to the COSVN Current Affairs Committee and the Military Affairs Committee of the Liberation Army headquarters.

1 February 1968  
For the Current Affairs Committee  
and the Military Affairs Committee  
of Nam Truong (COSVN)  
Bay Hong

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

50

(4)

INFORMATIC

XX

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Wednesday, Feb. 28, 1968  
6:50 p.m. *Rec'd 7:00p*

~~TOP SECRET~~

MR. PRESIDENT:

I shall pass along to the appropriate people  
this memorandum to you of Cabot Lodge's  
on urban security.

*WAW* Rostow

~~TOP SECRET-NODIS attachment~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NSC 7-9-79 letter

By rip, NARS, Date 10-19-79

50a

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

February 28, 1968

~~TOP SECRET - NODIS~~

To: The President

From: H. C. Lodge

*H. C. Lodge*

I suggest that the following be studied on an urgent basis by the appropriate officials in Washington and Saigon and that if it be found to have merit, fast and intense action be taken:

1. The presence of an unusually large number of U. S. and South Vietnamese troops in the cities creates an unprecedented opportunity to make the cities of Viet-Nam durably strong by repeated "comb-outs" -- precinct by precinct, block by block and house by house. The Vietnamese would actually conduct the "comb-outs", but the U.S. could provide valuable indirect help. Such an opportunity as this has never existed before.

2. In an A.P. interview with Wes Gallagher published Monday, February 26, General Westmoreland indicated his awareness of enemy "infiltration into the population centers" before the Tet raids, which is what makes the "comb-outs" so necessary.

~~TOP SECRET - NODIS~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority State 7-2-79 letter

By ing, NARS, Date 3-24-80

MEMORANDUM

FORMATION

32  
THE WHITE HOUSE

51

2H  
YY

~~TOP SECRET--SENSITIVE~~ WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED Wednesday, February 28, 1968 -- 6:55 p.m.  
Rec'd 7:15p

Mr. President: Authority NSC 7-9-79 letter  
By inf, NARS, Date 10-19-79

I sent the attached draft memorandum to the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Mr. Clifford.

At the end of a quite fruitful discussion of more than 3 hours, Sec. McNamara recommended (and Mr. Clifford concurred) holding this directive until the first draft reports are available on Saturday. We would then, when the materials were in, present a directive to you.

On the other hand, if you wish to have a directive like the attached completed earlier, this could be arranged.

I will not attempt to summarize the discussion which involved many points of view and touched on a wide range of issues. Aside from differences on the troop issue, with which you are familiar, these were some of the points that seemed to be agreed:

-- From our point of view -- and the Communist point of view -- 1968 is the "year of decision" in Vietnam. Not that the war will necessarily end this year, but its outcome will be foreshadowed by the events of this year.

-- Whatever we do about troops, a maximum effort must be made to get the best conceivable performance from the GVN and the ARVN. In this connection, we may wish to nail down and include in any budgetary proposals a mobilization effort in Vietnam going beyond the 65,000.

-- We must come to grips in our own mind with the terms of an acceptable negotiation and begin to talk in a mature way with the GVN about what we would regard as an acceptable outcome.

-- Whatever the decision on troops, we may wish to give Westy a new, more precise and updated directive, stating the objectives which we aim to achieve.

-- Joe Fowler made the following points:

- What is required on both the military and financial side is an Act of National Will.
- He would regard the increase in the military budget as a "not unmixed evil" since he believes a tax bill will then move, although probably at the expense of further reductions in civilian expenditures.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

-2-

- Our presentation should not merely include Vietnam but the need to make our military credibility more clear in Korea, Middle East, and elsewhere, since he believes that the Communists, together or separately, are probing at us in a number of directions.

-- At the end Clark Clifford gave assignments under each of the headings in this draft directive, which are to be completed by Saturday. The committee that met this afternoon will then work over the week end on a statement of alternatives and on its recommendations.

-- We underlined, at the close of the meeting, once again the extreme requirement for security.

W. A. Rostow

~~TOP SECRET~~

DRAFT

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

51a

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

February 28, 1968

MEMORANDUM TO: Secretary of State  
Secretary of Defense

As I indicated at breakfast this morning, I wish you to develop by Monday morning, March 4, recommendations in response to the situation presented to us by General Wheeler and his preliminary proposals.

I wish alternatives examined and, if possible, agreed recommendations to emerge which reconcile the military, diplomatic, economic, Congressional, and public opinion problems involved.

In particular, I wish you to consider, among others, the following specific issues:

-- What military and other objectives in Viet Nam are additional U. S. forces designed to advance?

-- What specific dangers is their dispatch designed to avoid, and what specific goals would the increment of force, if recommended by you, aim to achieve: in the next six months; over the next year?

-- What problems would we confront with respect to appropriations and the budget; and what measures would you propose to deal with those problems?

-- What problems would we confront with respect to balance of payments; and what measures would you propose to deal with those problems?

-- Should we go forward with an increment of U. S. forces; what negotiated posture should we strike, in general; and what modifications, if any, would you recommend with respect to the San Antonio formula?

-- Aside from the question of negotiations, what other diplomatic problems would we confront, and how should they be dealt with?

DECLASSIFIED

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~ Authority NSC 7-9-79 letter  
By inf, NARS, Date 10-19-79

-- What special effort can we and should we take at this time with respect to improving the political and military performance of the South Vietnamese?

-- How should we frame our proposals for the Congress with respect to: objectives; legislation required (e.g., selective call-up); appropriations?

-- What major Congressional problems can be anticipated, and how should they be met?

-- Aside from your recommendations on the dispatch of forces and reconstitution of reserves, what steps are required to build up a production base for our over-all military effort?

-- What problems can we anticipate in U. S. public opinion, and how should they be dealt with?

You should feel free in making this report to call on the best minds in the Government to work on specific aspects of the problem; but you should assure the highest possible degree of security up to the moment when the President's decision on these matters is announced.

~~TOP SECRET~~

52  
W. P. Bundy:bmm  
Feb. 29, 1968

First Draft

Options on Our Negotiating Posture

Whatever military or other courses of action we now adopt, we need to consider what moves we might make in the negotiating area. Broadly speaking, and particularly in relation to the Wheeler/Hestmoreland recommendations, we could do one of three things:

1. Stand pat on the San Antonio formula and on our basic position toward the terms of a negotiated settlement -- the Geneva Accords plus free choice in the South, rejecting a coalition or any special position for the NLF.
2. Take some new initiative, either privately or publicly, that might involve a change in our position on the San Antonio formula and/or a change in our position on the elements of a settlement, or that might seek to enlist and bring to bear outside factors such as Asian and Soviet interest in Southeast<sup>ASST</sup> broadly.
3. No change in our position for the present, but pitching our course of action toward a strong move for negotiations when and if we have countered Hanoi's offensive -- i.e., in a matter of four months or so perhaps.

DECLASSIFIED

~~TOP SECRET~~

Authority State 7-2-79 letter

By inf, NARS, Date 3-24-80

The difference between 1 and 3 is essentially one of posture. The crucial question is to examine what we could conceivably do by way of a new initiative under 2. This paper assesses possible gambits and their implications.

#### Basic Assumptions

We must make certain basic assumptions concerning the present situation.

First, it seems most doubtful that Hanoi will be prepared for a serious move toward peace, except on its own terms, for the immediate future. They are obviously confident and determined to press their strategy in the hope of further gains. If we sat down at the table with them now, the odds are overwhelming that their position would be totally stiff and unyielding.

Second, while Hanoi may continue to play public and diplomatic games to give the impression of a peace posture, it seems most unlikely that they would give us anything convincing on the "no advantage" assumption in the San Antonio formula. They could encourage the kind of "impressions" that they would not take advantage that have already been put out by U Thant and Sainteny, but they are most unlikely to take a public and identifiable position on this key point. They could drop "half a shoe" by a firm statement that talks would follow in a matter

of days after the bombing stopped, and this would somewhat increase public pressures for peace, particularly in Europe and other more susceptible countries. But they are unlikely to do anything that would give us a real basis for convincing the GVN and our Vietnam allies that there would be the prospect of serious military restraints by Hanoi if we stopped the bombing.

Third, South Vietnamese official and public opinion seems to have three strands: (a) a firm belief that any early negotiations in present circumstances would be disastrous; (b) continued fear in some quarters that the US may negotiate without regard to South Vietnamese interests -- in present circumstances this would compound the critical adverse effect that our entry into negotiations would have in Vietnam, and the same would be true if we were to change our position on coalition governments or any other aspect of the internal political structure in the South; (c) an underlying trend toward greater receptivity toward peace at the right time -- this seems clearly evident in the posture of the new political alliance, and is implicit in the comments of Tran Van Do and even Thieu. In sum, the South Vietnamese would be highly sensitive to any immediate move, but sentiment is moving in the direction of accepting some form of negotiation if the situation can be righted at all.

Fourth, the Soviets continue to appear completely passive. This undoubtedly reflects their judgment that Hanoi would not move seriously no matter what the Soviets might urge them to do under the present circumstances. At the same time, if we engage in significant military increases, the Soviets might become more interested in the over-all prospects for peace in Southeast Asia, even though they might remain helpless as to Vietnam itself.

Fifth, certain key Asian countries -- notably Japan -- are plainly getting more and more worried over the trends in Vietnam, and would like to make some effort themselves in Vietnam. Moreover, they too could become more interested in wider possibilities for a settlement in Southeast Asia.

#### Possible Options

In the light of this assessment, our options might include:

- A. A change in our conditions for stopping the bombing.
- B. A change in our conditions for a settlement.
- C. Reiteration of our basic position on Vietnam in systematic form, but with additional elements designed to outline what peace could be like for Southeast Asia as a whole.
- D. Either for Vietnam, or more widely for Southeast Asia, enlisting Asian nations more explicitly in the search for peace.

E. Quiet discussions with the Soviets, looking less to any immediate hope in Vietnam than to a wider outline for a peace in Southeast Asia that would block Chinese Communist expansion.

Option A

Of the elements of the San Antonio formula, the only one that could conceivably be changed is the "no advantage" assumption. Yet any change in this would so obviously be a weakening of a position we have described over and over again as "rock bottom" that it would almost certainly have serious effects in South Vietnam and would make it very difficult for us to hold off on entering into talks at a time when the prospects are poor and the over-all psychological situation most adverse.

There remains the possibility of stating a new and alternative set of conditions for stopping the bombing, while adhering to the San Antonio formula as one set of conditions.

a. We could offer to stop the bombing if the other side stopped its military pressures in the northern two provinces of South Vietnam. Militarily, this one might be a good trade if it were carried out." The difficulty is that it would appear to be both an expression of weakness and even desperation as to our military situation

there, and that critics and careful analysts would soon realize that it was in fact a stiffer set of conditions than San Antonio. Nonetheless, the proposal would have some merit as a tactical move, supported by the argument that these pressures resulted from wholesale violation of the DMZ over a long period.

b. A more comprehensive proposal, already foreshadowed by the Canadians last spring, would be to offer to stop the bombing in return for restoration of the demilitarized status of the DMZ, accompanied by efforts to raise an ICC or other force that could police the demilitarization over time. We would get less military advantage from this than from an actual stopping of military pressures in the northern two provinces, and it might cause concern by Souvanna that we were simply moving Hanoi's supply lines totally into Laos. But the proposal has the advantage that it is already in existence and could be re-stimulated through the Canadians. It has the additional advantage that it tends to create a future policing force where it would be needed in the event of real settlement. Finally, in timing terms, it would hit Hanoi in the season when its Laos operations become difficult because of weather. All

told, this has much to commend it, and we believe could probably be sold to the GVN as an alternative to San Antonio.

Option B

There is much to be said, in any event, for a systematic restatement of our position on the Geneva Accords and free choice in the South, as a part of selling our whole course of action to the public, to Congress, and the world. Although we have stated all the elements at different times, we have not pulled them together for a long time and we could get a considerable impression of freshness, even novelty, and certainly reasonableness by identifying more precisely the elements of the Geneva Accords, our position on free choice, and perhaps adding something on external guarantees, which have always been a generalized part of our position and that of the South Vietnamese. We should prepare a draft in this sense in any case.

However, it seems much more difficult to envisage any substantive change in our position. There are two or three uncrossed bridges in our view of what might emerge concerning the political structure of the South in a settlement. Specifically, there is the question of whether the NLF could organize as a political party, the question of whether we would accept a "caretaker

government" to conduct universal elections at some point after a ceasefire and withdrawal, and the question whether we should endorse some form of international supervision or observation of universal elections. All these are possibilities that we have envisaged as conceivable areas of compromise -- although only the first has ever struck us as truly acceptable. However, for present purposes we must reckon that for us to take a new position on any of these points would put us in direct contradiction to the GVN positions on these elements, and would run particularly grave risks of adverse reactions, from the South Vietnamese. The fact is that the South Vietnamese fear of our moving in the direction of coalition is so acute that the slightest move in this area is almost certainly unacceptable strictly in terms of its effect within South Vietnam.

#### Option C

If we assume that we take the occasion to restate our basic position on a settlement in Vietnam, we could of course include reiteration of our basic position on Laos and Cambodia in any event. But we could conceivably go further than this and talk in terms of an over-all settlement for Southeast Asia that would ensure the independence and territorial integrity of all the nations of the area and that would specifically provide that each

nation was free to assume whatever neutral or other international posture it wished to take. We could explicitly state that we were prepared to accept a Southeast Asia that was "neutral" in the sense of not adhering to any power bloc or forming a part of any alliance directed at others.

There would be serious catches and pitfalls in such an approach, and certainly we would not wish to endorse a "neutralization" of Southeast Asia, simply because that word has acquired a connotation that nations cannot call for help from outside. On the contrary, we might expressly wish to include in our proposal an invitation to other nations to join with us in some form of "guarantee" or at least generalized assurance of help, for any nation that became subject to external aggressive action. (The lawyers would have to see how specific this could be made without running into treaty problems. Our 1964 statement after the Chinese nuclear explosion may be the furthest we could go <sup>WITHOUT</sup> such treaty implications).

Moreover, any suggestion that the area should be "neutral" must take account of the specific situation in Thailand and to a lesser extent the Philippines. Both of these nations need and depend on their alliances with us, through SEATO and bilaterally. Thailand would certainly be shaken if we took any

move that appeared to be in the direction of abandonment of SEATO and our present firm support for Thailand. Almost certainly, this objection could not be overcome, and we would have to make an exception for nations that wished to maintain alliance relationships directed solely at their own defense. This would water the proposal somewhat, but still leave an element in it that could be effectively stated.

#### Option D

Another possibility would be the enlisting of Asian nations in the search for peace in Vietnam, and perhaps more broadly in the formulation of terms for a basic Southeast Asian settlement.

We already have one overture -- by Iran -- in the direction of creating an Asian group to consider peace in Vietnam. The membership of the Iranian group (Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Cambodia, Iran, and Japan) is diffuse, however, and includes only Cambodia from within Southeast Asia/itself. At the very least, we would seek to see such a group include nations such as Indonesia, and hopefully Malaysia and Singapore -- if we assume that Thailand and the Philippines would be excluded by their direct involvement in the Vietnam conflict. (Burma looks like a very remote hope for any such public association.)

We shall know in the near future whether the Iranian suggestion has any response by North Vietnam. But however it turns out we could well consider turning to the Japanese -- or better the Indonesians -- to form a grouping to examine this issue. It might not take much urging to get these nations to look at the thing from the standpoint of Southeast Asia as a whole.

Option E

We continue to assume that the Soviet Union will back North Vietnam pretty much to the hilt on any reasonable requests for equipment related to the war in Vietnam. We continue to believe, moreover, that whatever Soviet desires there may be to get peace in Vietnam will remain as they have been -- subordinated to Hanoi's own desires and position. Hence, there seems less prospect that the Soviets can be usefully engaged at the present time in the direction of peace in Vietnam itself.

Yet this leaves the possibility that we might start quiet talks with the Soviets in the near future -- not in any sense public -- that would be designed to probe them a lot harder on the elements of a settlement in Southeast Asia as a whole. For we continue to believe that the Soviet Union does not wish to see Communist China expand into Southeast Asia.

One place to start might be discussions of the situation in Laos after the Vietnam conflict. It seems clear that the Soviets will remain negative on any present action both in Laos and in Cambodia, for the obvious reason that actions there tend to inhibit North Vietnam's effectiveness against South Vietnam. Yet, if the Soviet Union is looking down the pike at the possibility that the North will win, it must realize that -- if Hanoi takes over Laos and Cambodia as well -- the effect on Thailand would be drastic and would tend to redound to Communist China's benefit and conceivably against the Soviet view of Soviet interest.

Hence, the talks would have the job of ~~impressing~~ impressing upon the Soviets the need for maintaining a Laos settlement in the future, no matter what happens in Vietnam. We could be trying to lay a foundation for Soviet influence on Hanoi that would cause Hanoi to lay off Laos, with Soviet leverage being supplied at this point by Hanoi's need ~~XXXXXXXX~~ for Soviet help in reconstruction and by Hanoi's strong desire for a continuing guarantee from the Soviets against Communist China.

The major difficulty is that any such explorations might convey to the Soviets that we envisage defeat in South Vietnam, and that they in turn might pass this on to Hanoi and thus disturb whatever prospects for peace there may be in South Vietnam. This

~~TOP SECRET~~

13

needs careful weighing and an assessment of whether we could get enough possible gain from the approach to offset this clear risk.

[REDACTED]

RECEIVED  
WHCA

VV HNA459  
OO YEKADS  
DE YEKADL 8228R 0601043  
ZKZK OO ZSL DE  
O 291039Z ZYH

1968 FEB 29 11 15

SANITIZED  
Authority NLS-81-91  
By ics, NARS, Date 8-20-82

FM CIA  
TO WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM  
SSO ACSI DA  
SSO ARLINGTON HALL STATION  
AFSSO USAF  
CNO  
DIA/ISIC  
JCS  
NIC  
DIRNSA COMMAND CENTER  
STATE (RCI)  
CIA-OCI  
ZEM

(90)

CITE TDCS-314/35559-6S (ADVANCE)  
COUNTRY: SOUTH VIETNAM  
DOI: 27-29 FEBRUARY 1968  
SUBJECT: SITUATION REPORT IN I CORPS AS OF 1300 HOURS ON  
29 FEBRUARY

ACQ: VIETNAM, DANANG (29 F  
BRUARY 1968). FIELD NO. [REDACTED]  
SOURCE: THIS IS A SITUATION REPORT ON 29 FEBRUARY PREPARED  
FROM REPORTS [REDACTED]  
AVAILABLE LOCALLY.

1. DURING THE NIGHT OF 28/29 FEBRUARY A CAP TEAM AT THU ONG  
HAMLET IN HAI LANG DISTRICT, QUANG TRI PROVINCE, WAS ATTACKED BY  
A SAPPER TEAM OF UNKNOWN SIZE. ALL CASUALTIES ARE NOT KNOWN BUT  
TWO U.S. SOLDIERS (ONE MARINE, ONE ARMY) WERE KIA, TWO POPULAR  
FORCE SOLDIERS WERE KIA, AND AN UNKNOWN NUMBER WERE KIA, AS WELL  
AS A PROBABLE FOUR ADDITIONAL KIA. ALSO DURING THE NIGHT AND INTO  
THE MORNING THREE ENEMY COMPANIES WERE ENGAGING ALLIED FORCES  
AT CAN LO DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS, QUANG TRI.

2. ACCORDING TO A MILITARY OBSERVER THE ENEMY IS GETTING  
CLOSE TO KHE SANH AND BY 27 FEBRUARY WAS SO CLOSE THAT B-52  
BOMBER AND OTHER COUNTERMEASURES OF MASS DESTRUCTION CANNOT BE  
USED. THREE ENEMY TANKS WERE DETECTED WITHIN 1,500 METERS OF THE  
PERIMETER. RESUPPLY OF TROOPS IS PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT ON  
HILLS 381, 361, AND 950. THE ENEMY IS KNOWN TO BE USING WIRE  
COMMUNICATIONS. POWS HAVE REPORTED THAT WIRE ALSO IS BEING  
USED BY THE ENEMY IN THE BASE 101 AREA, SOUTHWEST OF QUANG TRI  
CITY.

Approved for Release  
Date 2 AUG 1982

SANITIZED COPY

3. COORDINATION HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE FIRST BRIGADE OF THE U.S. FIRST AIR CAVALRY AND THE NATIONAL POLICE IN QUANG TRI FOR ATTACK AGAINST THE VC INFRASTRUCTURE. PLANS CALL FOR AT LEAST ONE OPERATION A DAY WITH THE CAVALRY SUPPLYING HELICOPTER TRANSPORTATION AND BACKUP SUPPORT, WHILE ELEMENTS OF THE SPECIAL POLICE AND THE NATIONAL POLICE FIELD FORCE ENTER THE TARGET AREA TO CONDUCT SEARCH, APPREHENSION AND INTERROGATION OF SUSPECTS. FOUR OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AND 24 SUSPECTS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED.

4.

5.

THE VC WERE PREPARING FOR A SECOND ATTACK ON QUANG TRI CITY BETWEEN 25 FEBRUARY TO 2 MARCH IF THE VC DID NOT ENCOUNTER OBSTACLES OR RECEIVE A CHANGE IN ORDERS. A NUMBER OF GUERRILLAS AND VC LOCAL FORCES HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO GATHER AND BE READY TO LEAD THE NVA WHEN AN ATTACK ORDER IS RECEIVED. ACCORDING TO THE PLAN THE VC INTEND TO CONTROL QUANG TRI CITY FOR TWO DAYS AND WILL USE THACH HAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THANH TAM HIGH SCHOOL AS AIR DEFENSE POSITIONS. THE VC INTEND TO SHELL HEAVILY INTO TRIEU PHONG AND HAI LANG DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS AND AI TU AIR BASE FOR ABOUT AN HOUR BEFORE THE GROUND ATTACK ON QUANG TRI CITY. THE PLAN SUPPOSEDLY IS COORDINATED FOR ATTACKS ON OTHER CITIES THROUGHOUT SOUTH VIETNAM. THREE ATTACK WINGS WILL INFILTRATE THE CITY TO ATTACK NATIONAL POLICE HEADQUARTERS AND SECTOR HEADQUARTERS, OCCUPY CERTAIN STREETS, AND ANNILATE GVN ELEMENTS. THE THIRD WING, COMPOSED OF FEMALE CADRES, SOME ARMED WITH LANCES AND SOME WITH RIFLES, IS RESPONSIBLE FOR A HOUSE-TO-HOUSE SEARCH TO ANNILATE PRO-GVN PERSONS.

6. NO SIGNIFICANT ENEMY ACTION OR CHANGE IN THE SITUATION WAS REPORTED FROM THE OTHER PROVINCES OF I CORPS, ALTHOUGH QUANG NGAI REPORTED SOME MORTAR AND SMALL ARMS FIRE ABOUT 1000 ON 23 FEBRUARY IN THE VICINITY OF THE POWER PLANT IN QUANG NGAI CITY. NO DAMAGE RESULTED.

7. FIELD DISSEM: STATE USMACV CORDS III MAF 7TH AF USARV COMNAVFORV USAID CINCPAC ARPAC PACAF (ALSO SENT SAIGON)

GP-1

900

NNNN

SANITIZED COPY

COPY

Lyndon B. Johnson Library

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

SANITIZED

54

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Thursday, February 29, 1968 -- 12:15 p.m.

Mr. President:

I gather from Ernie that this has come via Bill Douglas from

On the face of it, it has these elements:

- "prompt" equals 7-15 days;
- "substantive" equals anything within the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962;
- "either can bring in another party" means we could bring along the GVN;
- "acceptance of Clark Clifford's statement" means a partial acceptance of the assumption of the San Antonio formula, but it leaves open the following questions: What is a "normal" level of resupply? And it is not responsive with respect to quiet at the DMZ.

Although Bill Douglas says | did not wish to have this handled via the State Department, I recommend that we make this available promptly to Sec. Rusk and Clark Clifford; that we go back to the |

My guess is that it is an effort to dissuade us from reinforcing our troops rather than a serious movement towards a negotiated settlement; but we do have a duty to get to the bottom of it.

SANITIZED

Authority State 10-27-78, NSC 7-13-79By isp, NARS, Date 8-21-79

W. W. Rostow

Make available to Sec. Rusk

Make available to Clark Clifford

Call me \_\_\_\_\_

COPY  
L B J LIBRARY~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Q. If the bombing ceases, when will talks start?

A. 7 to 15 days.

Q. What will be the subject matter of the discussion?

A. Anything within the frame of reference of the Geneva Conference.

Q. Who will be parties to the talks?

A. North Viet Nam and the United States. Either can bring in another party.

Q. Will any advantage of the United States be taken in case of cessation of the bombing?

A. Hanoi accepts Clark Clifford's statement of January 25, 1968.

COPY  
L B J LIBRARY

COPY  
LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

55

(8) INFORMATION  
THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ *fs*

Thursday, February 29, 1968  
4:20 p.m.

Mr. President: *Rec'd 4:53*

This memorandum confirms that 9,069 -- virtually all -- of the Marines and the 82d Airborne are now in South Vietnam. The balance will be in Danang on March 13, having sailed from San Diego on Feb. 21.

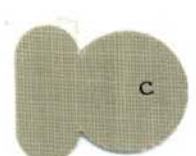
*W. Rostow*  
W. Rostow

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NSC 2-9-79 letter

By sp, NARS, Date 6-11-79



~~CONFIDENTIAL~~



THE NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

29 February 1968  
1250 EST

*Rosier*

2C

55a

THE JOINT STAFF

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subject: Deployment of the 3d Brigade TF, 82d Airborne Division and Marine RLT 27 (-). (U)

1. This memorandum is to confirm the closure of all elements of the 3d Brigade TF, 82d Airborne Division and Marine RLT 27 (-) in South Vietnam.

2. The 3d Brigade commenced movement from Pope Air Force Base, Ft. Bragg, North Carolina on 13 February 1968 and completed their deployment to Chu Lai, South Vietnam at 261830 PM EST (270730 AM Saigon time) February 1968. Three thousand seven hundred and twenty-four troops and 2,274.7 tons of cargo were airlifted in 161 missions.

3. The 2d and 3d Battalions of the 27th Marines commenced movement from the Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, California on 13 February and closed Da Nang, South Vietnam at 231245 PM EST (240145 AM Saigon time) February 1968. Three thousand, three hundred and fifty troops and 1,195.7 tons of cargo were airlifted in 97 missions.

4. The 1st Battalion, 27th Marines moved by sea from Hawaii in three US Navy vessels; the USS VANCOUVER (LPD-2), the USS BEXAR (APA-23), and the USS WASHBURN (AKA-108). One thousand nine hundred and ninety-five troops and 1,495 tons of cargo were transported with the last ship closing Da Nang at 280700 AM EST (282000 PM Saigon time) February 1968.

5. The 27th Marines Tank Company and a number of Shore Party personnel and their equipment departed San Diego, California on 21 February 1968 aboard the USS THOMASTON (LSD-28) and are expected to close Da Nang, South Vietnam at 130400 AM EST (131700 PM Saigon time) March 1968.

*Marshall B. Garth*  
MARSHALL B. GARTH  
Brigadier General, USA  
Deputy Director for  
Operations (NMCC)

Distribution  
(See attached page)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority OSD letter OCT 25 1978  
By *isg*, NARS, Date *6-28-79*

~~SECRET~~

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

29 February 1968

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Communist Alternatives in Vietnam

1. Current Intentions. The Communists probably intend to maintain widespread military pressures in Vietnam for at least the next several months. A special effort will be made to harass urban areas and keep them under threat. They will probably calculate that the US/GVN will be forced to defend the towns and the countryside will be left more vulnerable to Communist domination. At some time, new Communist attacks will probably be launched to seize and hold certain cities and towns. Where conditions appear favorable they will engage US forces, seeking some significant local success which would have a major political return. The total result of their campaign, they hope, will be to so strain the resources of the US and the GVN/ARVN, that the Saigon government will lose control of much of the country and the US will have little choice but to settle the war on Communist terms.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NLJ 81-91  
By ics, NARS, Date 8-20-82

GROUP 1

Excluded from automatic  
downgrading and  
declassification

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

2. In support of this effort, the Communists are now introducing more new weapons with greater fire power, improving the capacity and security of their supply routes, maintaining a high rate of infiltration, and probably introducing additional NVA units. They are also raising new levies as rapidly as they can in the countryside of South Vietnam in order to sustain the momentum of the recent offensive.

3. Military Alternatives. The broad alternative to the course described above is for the Communists to increase the level of military pressures. For example:

a. The Communists could intensify their offensive by committing almost all of their reserves from North Vietnam. This would be tantamount to an all-out invasion to gain decisive results as quickly as possible. They might be tempted by the prospects of seizing most of I Corps, where a "revolutionary" government would be proclaimed. The prospect of heavy US reinforcements might persuade them to gamble in this way before such US reinforcement could be committed.

b. Short of this radical move, the Communists might believe that the commitment of two or three additional divisions would be

- 2 -

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

decisive. They could use such forces in a general offensive in I Corps, which might be coordinated with a countrywide attack similar to 30-31 January. They might do something like this if they believed the situation was so precarious for the GVN that one last push would prove decisive.

The first of these alternatives would probably seem to them far too risky. While the Communists hope for a decisive outcome in their current efforts, we believe they will be careful to maintain reserves in North Vietnam to guard against an invasion and to enable them to continue the war if their offensive should prove indecisive. They could, of course, call on the Chinese to maintain the defense of NVN, but would almost certainly be reluctant to do this. The second alternative is more likely; it may indeed be a part of their plan in the current offensive.

c. Rather than maintaining steady pressures or radically escalating, the Communists might seek out one major battle which promised significant political gains, such as Khe Sanh, the western highlands, or in Saigon. They might believe that an isolated victory would have such profound political repercussions that the war would soon be terminated. The analogy with Dien

- 3 -

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Bien Phu would

Bien Phu would be uppermost in their minds. Such a move could, of course, be what they intend as the climax to their current campaign.

c.

d. Finally, the Communists could hope to affect the outcome in Vietnam by putting pressures on the US in Laos, where they might expand their current efforts and threaten to overrun most of the country. The purpose of this move would be to persuade the US that the only alternative to ending the war in SVN was its continued expansion.

4. Political Options.

Until the military campaign has run its course and the results are fairly clear, it is unlikely that Hanoi will be seriously disposed to consider negotiations with the US. A negotiating ploy is possible, however, at almost any point in the present military campaign. It would be intentionally designed to be difficult for the US to reject. The purpose, however, would not be a serious intent to settle the war, but rather to cause new anxieties in Saigon, which might cause a crisis and lead to the collapse of the Thieu-Ky government.

5. As of now

As of now Hanoi probably foresees two alternative sets of circumstances in which a serious move to negotiate a settlement might be entertained:

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

a. Obviously, if the military campaign is producing significant successes and the GVN is in serious disarray at some point Hanoi would probably give the US the opportunity to end the war. This might take the form of offering a general ceasefire followed by negotiations on terms which would amount to registering a complete Communist political success.

b. If, on the other hand, the military campaign does not go well and the results are inconclusive, then Hanoi would probably change its military strategy to continue the struggle on a reduced level.

- 5 -

~~SECRET~~